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ABSTRACT

An adult evening education program called SPHERE (Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment), which is a consortium of seven private and public institutions of higher learning, illustrates much on the subject of external communication linkage as it applies to schools. External and internal communications problems between member schools are faced daily by the individual directors of continuing education and the director of the independent coordinating agency. SPHERE objectives are (1) to develop and test four selected evening and weekend BA/BS degree programs, (2) to develop and implement an inter-institutional administrative system suited to the degree programs selected, (3) to gather information more clearly defining future academic interests of out-of-school adults and employers, and (4) to clarify inter-institutional criteria for academic quality. The director's responsibilities include coordinating and communicating between schools on course offerings, class scheduling, course tranfer equivalency, etc.; publicizing the program; recruiting and counseling students; conducting surveys to develop new course offerings; monitoring progress of students; and developing future grant proposals. Four types of horizontal communication function on a daily basis: task coordination, problem solving, information sharing, and conflict resolution. Success of the effort is attributed to such communication activities as keeping up with school contacts, keeping accurate and open flow of information operating between schools, dispelling rumors, providing feedback, explaining the mutuality of program benefits, and clarifying and refining purpose and service for all involved. (JT)

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LINKAGES BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

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at the

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on

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LINKAGES BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

INTRODUCTION: Thank you. My purpose this morning is twofold. (One) I will try and introduce you to an adult evening education program called SPHERE or the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment - which is a consortium of seven private and public institutions of higher learning. Secondly, in talking about our adult education program, I will attempt to use it as a vehicle for some observations on the massive subject area of external communication linkages as they might apply to schools. I am indebted to several sources for some of my reference material but I would like to acknowledge two main sources; one was a paper written by Paul Hurly, a graduate student, of the Continuing Education Department at the University of Saskatchewan and the other was material developed by Goldhaber in his book written on "Organizational Communication." (Slide 1) A variety of external communication problems are faced by Spokane Higher Educational Regional Enrichment on a daily basis in just the mere coordination of four different adult evening degree completion programs currently offered by three separate private schools and one state university. For example, explaining why one school should not offer evening programs in direct competition with another is often frustrating to say the least. External as well as internal communication problems between member schools are faced on a daily basis by the individual Directors of Continuing Education who occupy various

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positions of decision making at their respective schools. It has been said that fear and misunderstanding can quickly become root causes of breakdowns in any voluntary educational coordination arrangement. Often this is the case, for example, a myriad of problems can be created in determining course equivalencies between schools that in the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment program are guaranteed to be transferable. For example, is Speech 223 Small Group Comm really equal to Speech 453 Interpersonal Communication, equal to Sociology 366 Group Dynamics equal to Comm 306 Small Group Communication? The potential problem list could go on and on but suffice it to say that it is in the solving of these problems that good external communication principles can play an important role. In studying organizational theory the statement has been made that "inter-organizational relations are often a function of intra-organizational characteristics." So, as background, let's briefly look at the seven schools that are members of the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment program.

The smallest of the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment consortium is Fort Wright College, (Slide 2) a private school which has a total enrollment of about 450 and an evening population of 150. Located close to Fort Wright College is (Slide 3) Spokane Falls Community College a public school with a daytime population of 3200 and an evening school population of approximately 800. Its sister public school is Spokane Community College (Slide 4)

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having a daytime population of 4400 and an evening school population of 5000. Remember that both of these community colleges offer evening courses that transfer directly into the four current Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment degree programs. (Slide 5) Whitworth College a private school located on the north side of Spokane has a daytime population of around 1600 and an evening school population of 400. (Slide 6) Another private school Gonzaga University is located closer to downtown Spokane and has a daytime population of about 3000 students and an evening school population numbering around 200. Another public school is (Slide 7) Eastern Washington University whose main campus with over 7200 students is located at Cheney, Washington which is 16 miles southwest of Spokane. However evening school classes are offered in downtown Spokane and Eastern's evening downtown school population numbers about 1400. Finally, our largest Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment member is Washington State University (Slide 8). It has over 16000 daytime students but their main campus is located in Pullman, Washington about 75 miles south of Spokane. In February, Washington State University began offering a graduate level Education course in the Spokane area that is applicable to their Doctoral Degree program. Also Washington State University continues to offer video tape courses at the Masters Degree level in electrical and mechanical engineering in the greater Spokane area. Both these degree programs are available to adult students in the greater Spokane area. (Slide 9) If you remember

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the exchange theory in organizational communication it was stated that "when two or more organizations perceive mutual benefits from interacting and develop a relationship based on voluntary agreements", (like the arrangement in Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment) "domain consensus, effective communication, and a positive evaluation of the other member organizations become very important." So I believe it can be said that the general success of any educational cooperative program often depends on how well you can explain to the members of your organization as well as to the public, exactly what it is that you do! In other words what are your objectives? (Slide 10) PAUSE . . . . . The first Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment objective (Slide 11) is obviously underway . . . (slow) . . . probably the second Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment objective (Slide 12) is where general external communication principles will most likely play a key role. (PAUSE) The third objective (Slide 13) however will also include an application of external as well as internal communication techniques. (PAUSE) The fourth program objective of Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment (Slide 14) . . . (allow time for audience to read slide) involves again both external and internal communication techniques. These then are the four main objectives of the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment program. (Slide 15) Here again is what we hope our program provides. (PAUSE) A high frequency of interaction in inter-organizational relationships can be attributed to the success-

ful nourishment and satisfaction of organizational self-interest.

The Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment member schools agreed that it would be better to try and cooperate rather than to compete with one another with an oversaturation of duplicating adult evening degree programs all offered in the greater Spokane area.

In the initial four degree completion areas selected for trial under the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment banner it was further agreed there would be mutual program respect and cooperation between all schools. (Slide 16) The four initial program areas were as follows:

(a) Eastern Washington University would offer a BS degree in Organization and Mass Communication.

(b) Gonzaga University would offer a BA degree in Criminal Justice.

(c) Fort Wright College would offer a BA degree in Human Services.

(d) Whitworth College would offer a BS degree in Health Facilities Management.

Additionally these four area schools further agreed that any adult student attending school in the evening could complete their bachelor degree programs by taking, if desired, only a minimum number of courses offered at the degree granting institution. For example, only 16 in residence program hours were required to be taken at Fort Wright College for the award of their Human Services degree. The other required courses could be taken from any other member schools if so desired. Only 33 semester hours were

required in residence for the Gonzaga program, and only 45 hours in residence were required from the Whitworth and Eastern programs.

One final background note, my general responsibilities as director are shown here. (Slide 17) I hope to use these six general tasks as an aid in developing general guidelines for the development of external communication principles that could be used between schools. My first task (Slide 18) was key. I believe the very location of the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment office would have to be on neutral ground if Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment was to be considered by all members to be impartial. As it turned out an office was rented in the YMCA Building in downtown Spokane which turned out to be an ideal location. In locating here we gained the communication independence that comes from not being located at any member school therefore not being associated with that specific school and yet working for and representing all schools to the public. In fulfilling task one, an independent but coordinating agency, personal contacts were made by me with the Department Chairman of each school offering a program. Functional communication coordination lines were then developed on an informal basis to insure a relatively free exchange of information. Also all known evening adult courses in the Spokane area were catalogued by school and placed on file in the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment office. A base of information was now being developed at one central location for member schools and perspective students. Additionally,

telephone contact individuals located in the various school departments were set up to verify the accuracy of school course information requests. (Slide 19) In Task #2, we believed that a coordinated and time executed mass media program was essential to increase the public knowledge about Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment. All forms of mass media were used to advertise our program. Radio, television, newspapers, posters, and letters were utilized. The results and the cooperation received from the local media was gratifying. We soon became a clearing house for general educational counseling and information in the greater Spokane area. Task #3 (Slide 20) became a direct byproduct of our mass media campaign in assisting with the recruiting and counseling of all types of potential students. Initially our volume of calls was very heavy and a telephone recording device was installed to cover the weekends and periods after hours when the office was closed. We pride ourselves on the quick development of accurate responses to all inquiries whether they were on Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment programs or special weekend seminars. Program information furnished by the schools was either mailed out to telephone requestors or given directly to walk ins from our downtown office. We also attended each school's quarter or semester registration dispensing information about our program.

Task #4 (Slide 21) is currently underway. In conjunction with Washington State University, a general adult and community needs assessment survey of the greater Spokane area is underway at

this time. I cannot give you too much information about it now but suffice it to say that our current course offerings will be surveyed along with other programs and conclusions based on all gathered data will be given directly to the appropriate schools for appropriate action. In Task #5 (Slide 22) we felt accurate student monitoring has been difficult to fully accomplish due to the basic tracking and reporting problems associated with any evening degree completion students. However we have developed forms for students in the programs but the accuracy of the total number is questionable. For example, whether the student was influenced by Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment to join the evening degree program or was already planning on joining the program regardless of the coordinating efforts of Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment is not always known. In the future we hope to use the schools computers in helping us to accomplish this particular task.

In Task #6 (Slide 23) planning is already taking place in terms of attempting to offer more upper division level courses to adult students in areas outside of greater Spokane. One possible proposal might be to offer courses under the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment banner at communities like Colville which is located 95 miles north of Spokane. Hopefully an appropriate type of Bachelor degree completion program could be offered at that or other locations that would follow onto the Associate of Arts degree completion programs now being offered by

District 17. I might add there are three graduate education courses now being offered this Spring at Colville but they really do not follow on to any program currently offered by the Community Colleges.

Goldhaber in his book on Organizational Communication suggested that there were four functions or types of horizontal communication (Slide 24). We at Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment work on a daily basis in these four areas and at meetings on a monthly basis with the Directors of Continuing Education of the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment member schools. For example, the Chairman of each meeting is also the host school. Thus in this small group setting of seven Directors of Continuing Education, these four key areas are addressed in relation to each evening program. I cannot emphasize enough that in any type of external communication occurring between two or more schools the importance of having a positive helping staff attitude. The desire and willingness to learn and to try new adult education programs; the development of complete information required by the caller; the wanting to listen to the complaints as well as to the requests; the willingness to mediate and above all to listen to the adult student seeking educational information is a must if you are to succeed in any program. (Black Slide) We have all learned many personal communication skills in our formal education but perhaps we need a reminder on a few of them: For example, being able to actively

listen, clarifying messages that are received by us by paraphrasing; avoiding our internal tendency to date and index messages received from others; recognizing our ability or inability to separate fact from inference; understanding our ability or inability to describe our feelings and lastly cultivating our ability to provide timely feedback to others. Interpersonal communication skills play an important part in the public's reaction to your adult education program and in inter-organizational communication linkages. I believe any organizational cooperation depends upon sensitivity, diplomacy and mutual understanding.

In closing this rather general discussion, "What has been the result of these external communication linkages as they have applied to Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment?" (Slide 25) (EXPLAIN) One additional area that we have entered into recently is a program called Spokane Community Forum in which free programs are presented two or three times a week to interested adults during the lunch hour. The programs are informal, the speakers are not paid but volunteer their services and to date all presentations have been well received. Again the result is exposure of higher education programs to the general public.

I do not mean to leave with you the impression that I believe we are finished learning or finished communicating or that everything at Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment runs smoothly all the time. (Slide 26) There still remains the ever present factors of basic economic survival for each member school,

there remains continued suspicion of new programs by other schools; the "What's in it for Me?" attitude is constantly a threat to any cooperative educational venture between private and public schools. The statement has been made and perhaps rightly so, "no organization will ever willingly cut its own throat on the basis of some alleged common good." But by maintaining active and effective external communication relationships; by keeping up with each of your school contacts; by keeping an accurate and open flow of information operating between schools, by dispelling rumors; by providing feedback wherever possible; by continuing to explain the mutuality of program benefits; by continuing to clarify and refine your purpose and service to all who will listen I believe your cooperative adult educational program will succeed. Being open, direct and honest in any inter-institutional communication linkage pays big dividends. (Slide 27) This then has been a brief look at the Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment program and a few of my thoughts on external communication linkage between schools. Before I take questions I would like to have you view a video tape on external communication.

There are 40,000,000 adults in some type of job transition. It has been estimated that over 60% are actively seeking adult education primarily as a result of job competition. Often their first contact with a school or a program is by telephone!

(Play videotape)

Ask for questions.

Whitworth - E.W.U. - Gonzaga - Ft. Wright -
W.S.U. - S.C.C. - S.F.C.C.
SPHERE
Spokane
Higher
Education
Regional
Enrichment

Slide 1 14

Slides 2 through 7 were removed because of poor reproducibility

Domain Consensus

Effective Communication

Positive Evaluation of Other Member Organizations

Slide 9

Slide 11

1 To develop and test four selected evening and weekend BA/BS degree programs.

Slide 12

2 To develop and implement an inter institutional administrative system suited to the degree programs selected.

Slide 13

3 To gather information more clearly defining the future academic interests of out of school adults and employers to improve the integration between the academic program and the skills and knowledges needed by individuals.

Slide 14

4 To clarify inter-institutional criteria for academic quality so as to

A insure that learning experiences equal those found on campus.

B insure courses meet various accrediting requirements.

C recognize vocational preparation and experience whenever possible.

Slide 15

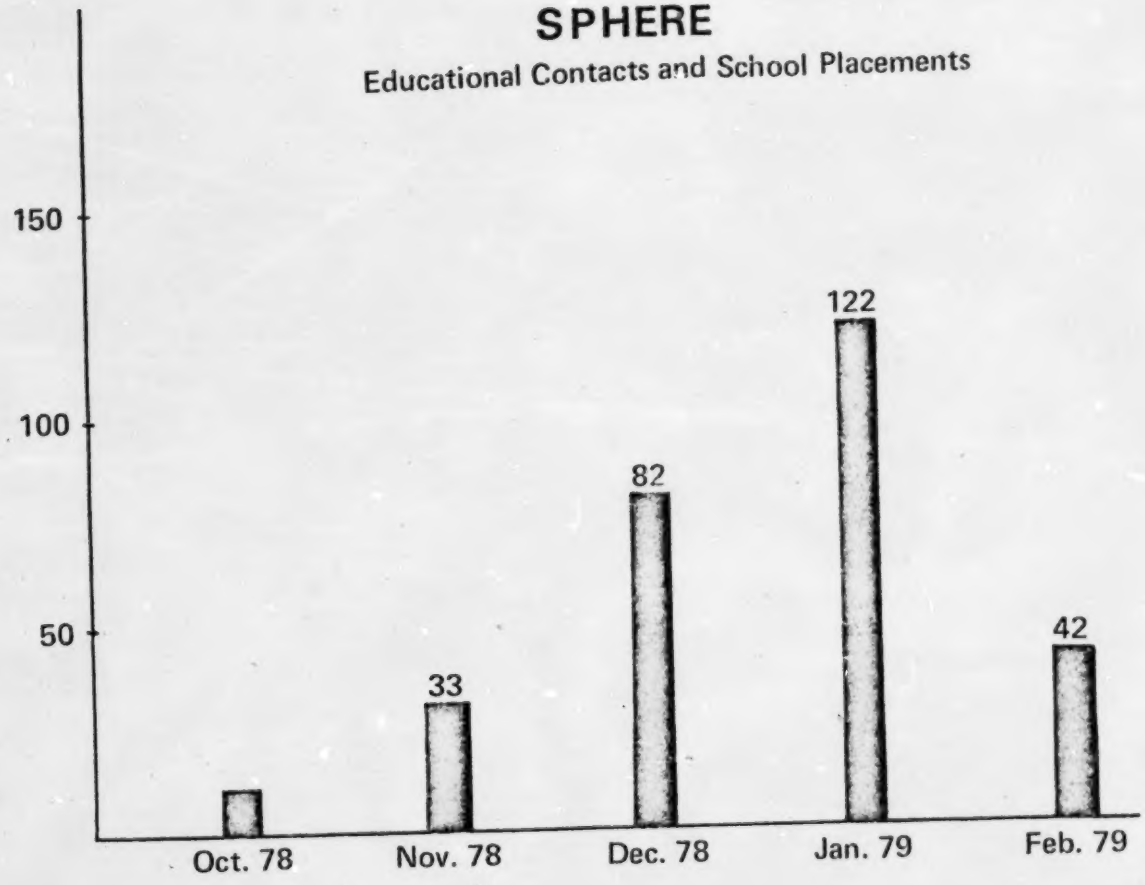
SPHERE provides a mechanism for coordinating educational resources on the principle of adequate and complete service to "out of school adults" in a defined geographic area.

Slide #10

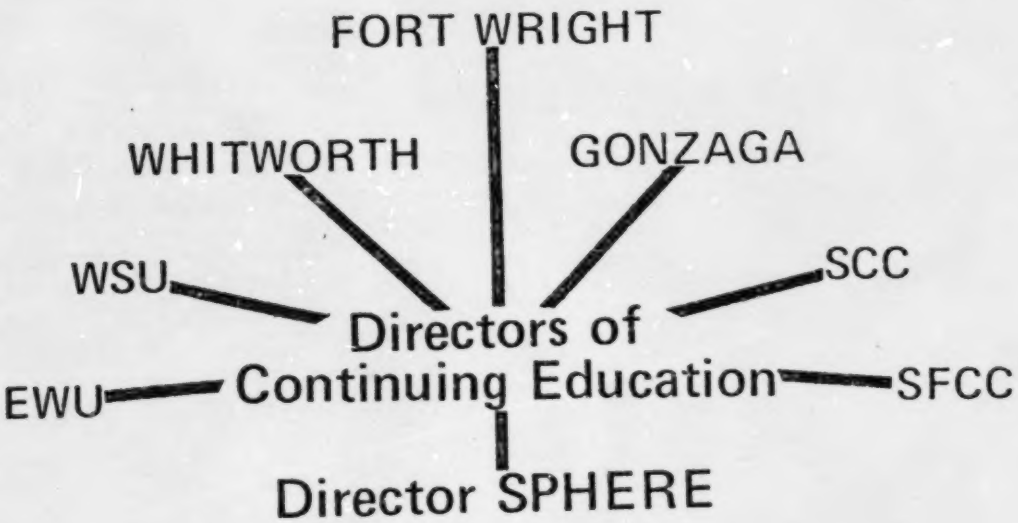
SPHERE OBJECTIVES

(Spokane Higher Education Regional Enrichment)

Slide 16


SPHERE
Educational Contacts and School Placements
150
100
50
122
82
42
33
Oct. 78
Nov. 78
Dec. 78
Jan. 79
Feb. 79

Slide 17



1. Coordinates and communicates between schools on: course offerings, class scheduling, course transfer equivalency, student problems, etc.
2. Publicizes the program through a variety of mediums.
3. Recruits and counsels students.
4. Conducts surveys to develop new additional course offerings.
5. Monitors progress of students through existing programs.
6. Develops future grant proposals as required.

Slide 18

1. Coordinate course offerings, class schedulings, transfer equivalencies, student problems among Sphere schools

Slide 19

2. Publicizes the program through a variety of media

Slide 20

3. Recruits and Counsels Students

Slide 21

4. Conducts surveys to develop additional course offerings

Slide 22

5. Monitors progress of students through existing programs

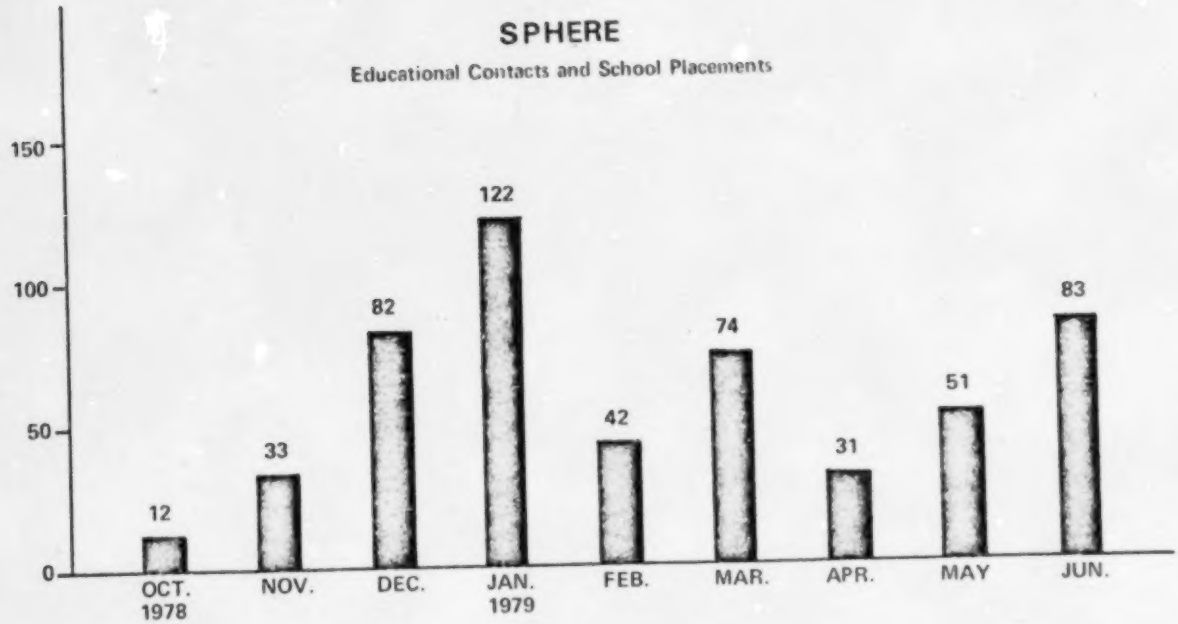
Slide 23

6. Develops future grant proposals as required

Slide 24

Task Coordination
Problem Solving
Information Sharing
Conflict Resolution

Slide 25



SPHERE

- Eastern Washington University
- Fort Wright College
- Spokane Falls Community College
- Gonzaga University
- Whitworth College
- Washington State University